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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 002021

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KN, KS
SUBJECT: ROK FOREIGN MINISTER ON AFGHANISTAN, FTA AND NORTH KOREA

REF: SEOUL 02020

Classified By: Ambassador D. Kathleen Stephens.
Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

¶1. (C) Summary: In a one-on-one breakfast with the Ambassador December 30, Foreign Minister Yu Myung-hwan reaffirmed Seoul's commitment to establishing a PRT in Afghanistan, saying the Administration expects the National Assembly to pass the necessary legislation in February. Yu expressed concerns that failure to pass the U.S.-ROK Free Trade Agreement in 2010 might adversely affect Korean public attitudes and repeated his firm position that North Korea should not be rewarded merely for returning to the Six-Party Talks. He was familiar with the compromise of OpPlan 5027 but asserted he had only learned of the issue "very late." Yu's discussion of details of the ROK's USD 40 billion nuclear power plant deal with the UAE are being reported septel (Seoul 02020). End Summary.

Afghanistan

¶2. (C) FM Yu told the Ambassador on December 30 that the bill authorizing a Korean Provincial Reconstruction team in Afghanistan bill will go to a National Assembly vote in February 2010. FM Yu, echoing comments made by National Security Advisor Kim Sung-hwan to the Ambassador last week, implied that the ruling party floor leader at the national assembly unilaterally agreed with the opposition party to delay consideration of the bill, to the consternation of the Blue House, MND and MOFAT. Until then, the ROKG will continue to move forward with planning, including KOICA mobilization. After the bill is passed in February, the ROKG plans to announce a USD 100 million contribution to Afghanistan (while this is the first tranche of USD 500 million spread over five years, Yu was not specific about whether the entire amount will be announced at the same time); the "special budget" for this USD 100 million contribution has been already worked out with the Finance Minister. Yu said he will visit NATO in Brussels after the PRT bill passes.

¶3. (C) In an effort to build public support and ensure passage of the bill in the National Assembly, Yu has done off-the-record briefings with editors and editorial writers to explain Afghanistan and why South Korea -- as a member of the OECD and chair of the G-20 -- needs to participate in the effort there. Yu outlined in detail some of projects the ROK intends to pursue, including the possible construction of a cement factory, and a fruit drying and packaging plant. These practical projects, involving small business efforts essential to the ROK's own early economic development, will

help increase public support for the ROK presence.

¶4. (C) Yu noted the continued political sensitivity to any increased risk to private Korean tourists or missionaries. The ROK would continue to strongly discourage, or prevent as much as possible, Korean citizens travelling to Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Yemen. If one or two Koreans get in trouble in these places, the public would hold the individuals responsible, but when a group is seized, inevitably the ROKG is under pressure to do something.

FTA

¶5. (C) Yu said he was very worried about the consequences of not moving to ratification of the KORUS FTA in 2010. Public attitudes in Korea were likely to shift if the United States were perceived as unwilling to move on the FTA three years after signing.

North Korea and the 6PT

¶6. (C) Yu stressed the ROK would stick to its principles of not rewarding the North Koreans just for returning to talks and of making denuclearization a required agenda item in any inter-Korean discussion. Yu said China should now assume responsibility for delivering Pyongyang to the Six-Party Talks. Yu said Wu Dawei, who had accompanied Vice President Xi Jinping to Seoul, had told Yu that China was prepared to convene a Six- Party Talks session by the end of January; other Chinese officials, however, were saying it would not happen until after the lunar new year in mid-February.

Hacking Incident

¶7. (C) Turning to the recent hacking incident, the Ambassador reiterated USG views, which Yu affirmed both NSA Kim and MOFAT Director General had discussed with him. Yu claimed not to have been informed of the incident until "very late." The Foreign Minister said the MND officials involved kept it quiet because they were afraid of being punished. Yu agreed the incident was very serious and affirmed that the points made in our recent demarches on the subject were well-taken.

STEPHENNS